AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following is a complete listing of revised claims with a status identifier in parenthesis.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. – 22. (Canceled)

23. (New) A networked sound masking system, comprising:

a communication network;

a plurality of sound masking units, each sound masking unit connected to the communication network, each sound masking unit configured to selectively output a signal from at least one of a plurality of output signal channels carried over the communication network based on a control signal carried over a control signal channel of the communication network; and

a control unit configured to selectively output at least one sound masking signal on the plurality of output signal channels of the communication network, and the control unit configured to generate the control signal and output the control signal on the control signal channel of a communication network.

24. (New) The system of claim 23, wherein the control unit is configured to receive at least one paging signal, and output the paging signal on one of the plurality of output signal channels.

25. (New) The system of claim 24, wherein the control unit is configured to selectively combine a sound masking signal and a paging signal, and output the combined signal on one of the plurality of output signal channels.

26. (New) The system of claim 23, wherein the control unit is configured to receive a plurality of the sound masking signals, and output the plurality of sound masking signals on different ones of the plurality of output signal channels.

27. (New) The system of claim 23, wherein the control unit is configured to generate the control signal to identify at least one of the sound masking units and to indicate from which of the output signal channels the identified sound masking unit is to obtain a signal for output.

28. (New) The system of claim 23, wherein the plurality of sound masking units are connected in a series in the communication network.

29. (New) The system of claim 28, wherein each of the plurality of sound masking units includes a first interface and a second interface, the first interface interfacing with an upstream side of the communication network, and the second interfacing with a downstream side of the communication network, the upstream side being closer to the control unit and the downstream side being further from the control unit.

30. (New) The system of claim 23, wherein the control unit generates the control signal and populates the plurality of output signal channels such that the plurality of sound masking units

are associated with a plurality of sound masking zones, each sound masking unit is associated with one of the plurality of sound masking zones, and the sound masking units provide sound masking for the associated sound masking zone independently of the other sound masking zones.

31. (New) The system of claim 30, wherein the control unit populates the plurality of output signal channels such that the sound masking units associated with each sound masking zone provide sound masking tailored to suppress sound in the associated sound masking zone.

32. (New) The system of claim 30, wherein a number of the plurality of sound masking units is different from a number of the plurality of sound masking zones.

33. (New) The system of claim 23 wherein the control unit includes an address generator for assigning addresses to the sound masking units.

34. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein the address generator comprises a component for generating a logical address for each of the sound masking units, and the logical address being derived from an identifier associated with each of the sound masking units.

35. (New) The system of claim 24, wherein each of the sound masking units includes a first control component and a second control component, the first control component being selectively responsive to the control signals for controlling characteristics of the sound masking signal, and the second control component being selectively responsive to the control signals for controlling characteristics of the paging signal.

36. (New) The system of claim 35, wherein each sound masking unit includes a demultiplexer for demultiplexing a combined signal obtained from one of the output signal channels into a paging signal and a sound masking signal and for sending the paging signal to the second control component and the sound masking signal to the first control component.

37. (New) The system of claim 35, wherein the controllable characteristics of the sound masking signal include a variable contour characteristic.

38. (New) The system of claim 35, wherein the controllable characteristics of the sound masking signal include a variable gain characteristic.

39. (New) The system of claim 35, wherein the controllable characteristics of the sound masking signal include a variable frequency characteristic.

40. (New) The system of claim 35, wherein the controllable characteristics of the sound masking signal include a volume characteristic.

41. (New) The system of claim 23, further comprising:

a remote control unit configured to send adjustment signals wirelessly; and wherein

the control unit is configured to receive the adjustment signals and generate the control signals based on the received adjustment signals.

42. (New) The system of claim 41, wherein the remote control unit is configured to receive sound measurements and generate the adjustment signals based on the received sound measurements.

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